

U-2 Data Aided U. S. Military Planning

Gates says Defense got valuable Soviet information, Senate hears explanations of program and incident.

By Evert Clark

Washington—High-altitude reconnaissance flights of the Lockheed U-2 over Russia provided Defense Department with military planning information on "airfields, aircraft, missiles, missile testing and training, special weapons storage, submarine production, atomic production and aircraft deployments and things like these," Defense Secretary Thomas S. Gates, Jr. said last week.

Gates' testimony before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee was the first detailed official acknowledgment of the great value of the reconnaissance accomplished by the U-2 since 1956.

Although the U-2 program was operated by the Central Intelligence Agency—with weather research by National Aeronautics and Space Administration and USAF's Air Weather Service offered as the ostensible reason for the flights—Gates said it is obvious that Defense was "the prime customer" for the information gathered, and "ours was the major interest."

Results of the flights have been "considered in formulating our military programs," Gates said.

The Senate committee took four days of secret testimony on the U-2 operations, the government's responses to Soviet claims that one had been shot down and the pilot captured on May 1, near Sverdlovsk, and the abortive summit conference in Paris on May 16.

After censoring by Central Intelligence Agency and State Department, parts of the testimony were made public, although none of the testimony by CIA Director Allen Dulles was released. The most heavily censored of the testimony which was released was that of Dr. Hugh L. Dryden, deputy administrator of NASA. Dryden was familiar with NASA's portion of the U-2 program dating back to the original involvement of the predecessor National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics four years ago.

Dryden Testimony

Committee Chairman Sen. William Fulbright (D.-Ark.) told reporters after Dryden testified that Dryden had had "long experience—I think he knew a good deal about what was going on."

Fulbright said it was "a rather dangerous undertaking" to have used NASA as a "cover" for espionage operations. Dryden's testimony made it clear that NASA was taking directions from CIA from a period shortly after the downing of the U-2 became known until May 7, when NASA was instructed to refer all further questions to the State Department.

The heavily censored Dryden testimony did not make clear, however, how many, if any, NASA officials knew in the preceding four years specifically what the U-2's basic mission was and which agency was directing the overall programs.

Secretary Gates also defended his ordering of a communications alert from Paris on the night of May 15, just before the summit conference was to begin and said he would do the same again under similar circumstances. He said the military services are always on some degree of alert, and at any particular time it is "merely a matter of moving the degree . . . up or down the scale."

When he ordered the alert, the U. S. already was aware that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was to demand apologies from the President for the U-2 incident the next day and that Khrushchev planned to wreck the conference, Gates said.

Precautionary Alert

"It was not an act that was either offensive or defensive in character," Gates told the committee. "It was a sound precautionary measure. It did not recall . . . personnel from leave. There was no move of forces involved."

"However, I want to emphasize that it did make certain that if subsequent developments made necessary a higher state of readiness, such action could be

taken promptly and convincingly," Gates said.

"Under the circumstances, it seemed most prudent to me to increase the awareness of our unified commanders. Moreover, since commands and individuals concerned in the decision process, including the President, Secretary of State and myself were overseas, it was important to check out military communications."

Gates wanted "a quiet increase in command readiness, particularly with respect to communications" and "without public notice if possible." Some commands "went further . . . than I anticipated," however, and the alert became public knowledge. But the alert "was proper and absolutely essential," Gates said, "and in similar circumstances I would take exactly the same action."

The testimony revealed that Gates, Secretary of State Christian Herter and the President were aware that a program of flights was planned for approximately the period in which the summit meeting was scheduled. None of them objected to the series of flights, and there never was a discussion specifically of whether the flights should be suspended while the summit meeting was in progress, according to the testimony.

Cause for Suspension

Herter indicated that suspending flights because of one diplomatic consideration or another would have "debarred" flights during so many periods that few could have been made. Gates said he knew of no time when diplomatic or political reasons had caused suspension of a flight, including the time of Khrushchev's visit to the U. S.

Gates was briefed "on the preliminary results of the Apr. 9 [U-2] flight" some weeks before the May 1 incident, and at that time he "gave my approval" to CIA for the next program of flights, "one of which would be selected to be flown," he said.

Gates' answer to the question of whether U-2 flights were under Air Force control read this way: "No, sir. They were under control of the [deleted]." An earlier Gates' statement, released by the committee, said CIA was the operator. Other testimony indicated that neither the President nor the National Security Council, which is composed of the President, Vice President and key cabinet officers, generally knew of or approved specific flights. CIA planned groups of alternate flights and at least sometimes two groups, but the pattern was that CIA served as the operating agency for an over-all program

New Defense Alert

Washington—Another defense communications alert and exercise began at 11 p.m. EDT last Wednesday and was scheduled to last several days. Defense Secretary Thomas S. Gates, Jr., said the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended more such alerts on a "no-notice" basis as a result of the one called last May 15, was to have begun in Paris.